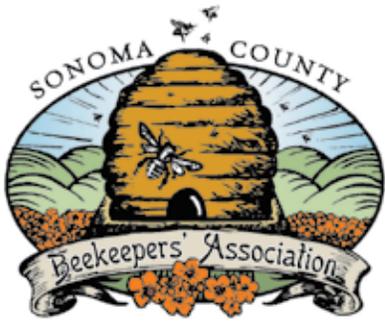


The Monthly Extractor



Volume 43, Issue 4

April 2018

This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.

President's Message

This Month's Calendar

Fellow Beeks,

"Spring forward" and boy have we! Time change, weather change.... It's all happening and fast. As per usual we've been thrown a curve ball and have to figure out what to do. Rain and cold for the last few weeks and now we have 70 + degree weather. You all know what that means. SWARMS!

Spring is one of the most exciting times for us beekeepers but it's also the busiest. And, it's the best time to make sure you have everything you need. Equipment, your Bee Budd(ies), hive placement. Remember if you're adding to your apiary, make sure you've checked out the sun/shade pattern. Now is the best time to plan where to put your additional hive(s) so they get the right amount of sun and shade.

Are you planning to go to your next Clusters Bee Café? Do you have a bee buddy? Do you know when your cluster meetings are? Do you know who is in charge of the "Needs Bees list" in your cluster? Do you have a phone list? Have you partnered with someone to "swarm catch" with?

March went by fast and April is going to go even faster! Remember to pace yourself(ves). Be prepared so you are able to enjoy time in your hives. Plan ahead and get some hive dives on your calendar. If you're a newbie, jump in with two feet. Seasoned beekeepers, support our newbees: collect a few under your wings and help them. Here's to Springing, Splitting and Swarming (catching)!

All the *Beest*,



Kelli Cox
President

Monthly Meeting: Monday, April 9

- 6PM** Check out books and videos from our library, buy plants at our fabulous plant table, talk to expert beekeepers willing to share their knowledge with you and help with any problems, socialize with refreshments and meet your cluster leaders. Bring your own cup, please. If you like to bake we also would appreciate donations of your cooking skills!
- 7PM** Honey tasting with Orietta Gianjorio from Napa and UC Davis.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- April 28/29 Sonoma County Farm Trails Spring Tour: Blossoms, Bees and Barnyard Babies
- May: Bernardo Niño from UC Davis will speak about the CA Master Beekeeper program, as well as providing perspectives on methods of Varroa mite control.

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Beek Of The Month

Our Beek(s) of the Month are Candice Koseba and Denise Feldman from North Cluster. Candice has been a beekeeper for going on 3 years and is one of the Coordinators for our North Cluster group. From the very beginning she jumped in with two feet, assisting wherever possible. Even with a full plate of 5 yr. old son, 14-month baby, very energetic dog, a job, and a hard working husband she manages to give even more time and energy to the North Cluster beekeepers.

Denise (a top bar beekeeper) a beekeeper for 4 years has partnered with Candice for hive dives and together exemplify exactly what the SCBA is all about.

Our "Beeks Of The Month" for March

are

Candice Koseba and Denise Feldman

Kelli Cox
President



Look at his big smile

Here is the letter we received from a parent regarding Candice and Denise's work:

Thank You Letter From a Parent

Hello,

I just wanted to check in and let you know about the INCREDIBLE experience we had today. As you read from my first email, my 5-year old son is doing his science fair project on bees. From the first response I received regarding my inquiry, I felt like a VIP. Members of your association responded quickly to get me in touch with the right person who could help us complete our science fair project. So I want to first acknowledge everyone who responded to my initial email and say THANK YOU.

Next, I was contacted by Candice who was a pleasure to communicate with. Her support of the project and willingness to help was much appreciated. Candice coordinated with her fellow beekeeper friend, Denise and we all met today at Denise's lovely home. My son, daughter, and I were warmly welcomed and treated with kindness. Candice brought gloves and a hat for my son to wear and Denise let me borrow one of her hats. Denise gave us a first hand look into the world of bees by showing us all the hives in her backyard. It was a unique experience we will never forget! Both Candice and Denise sent us off with goodies of honey and wax that my kids were so excited to receive!

My son is very shy and quiet, but on the way home he could not stop talking about how great the experience was. When we got home, he went straight to his room and made paper bees. He then used a cardboard box to pretend it was the beehive. And for the rest of the night, he played "beekeeper." This hands-on experience gave him the motivation to complete his project that videos and literature didn't give him. He even asked, "can we finish my science project tonight?"

It is just amazing and refreshing to encounter total strangers who are willing to help and share their knowledge - and even open their home to us! We will definitely be acknowledging these AWESOME women AND the Sonoma County Beekeeper's Association on our science fair display board but I hope Candice and Denise can somehow receive recognition in your association as well for their generosity and hospitality. Thank you again for your kindness and support of our science project. And thank you for all you do for the bees and our community.

Best regards,

Resha Thornton

My April

Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

© 2018

Bee on large combs

This will be my fifth year using very large frames in my hives. It's an experimental set-up that I dubbed "Double-Deep Brood Chambers" or "DD" for short. Not to be confused with conventional stacks of two individual hive bodies, these tall brood chambers contain frames that are the equivalent in size of two Langstroth deep frames. This trial has achieved more than I expected. It has also opened a fresh perspective on colony life for me.

Because the bees are given large open frames with no foundation or intermediate bars, the comb builders fashion their constructions freely, except for the influence honey flows or dearth may have on them. While the bees extend their brood combs downward in the frames, they first form worker-size cells, just like swarms do when they move into empty nest cavities. The vast majority of the worker cells measure 5.25 mm wide, with most of the deviating cells being slightly larger. This is exactly what I have observed in bee trees. Then, when the comb builders have built enough of these cells to sustain the hive's worker bee population, they start producing larger drone-size cells. How deep in the brood chamber this shift in cell size occurs is indicative of the prolificacy of the queen and of the strength of the colony. But it also depends on other factors, which include the number of combs that are being built simultaneously. Frequently, the lower edges of the combs are skewed toward the entrance of the hive while comb construction is in progress.

Whereas a few strong hives could possibly use even taller frames, less vigorous colonies or young ones that are started near the end of the spring nectar flow tend to leave a few inches of open space below the lower edges of their combs. Based on this observation, the 17 3/8" (44 cm) vertical dimension of the DD frame openings seems to satisfy most colonies. The width of the frames, end to end, appears to be less important to the bees, and at 17" (43 cm) it looks optimal.

It takes only five or six of these large frames to maintain a beautiful brood nest. The bees clearly exhibit a strong preference to expand, contract, or move their nests along the planes of the combs rather than moving from comb to comb. The lateral frames of the DD brood chambers often become copiously filled with stores. Remarkably, as these colonies use their combs according to their own instinct and needs, they organize the contents of the brood chambers somewhat differently than when smaller frames fragment their nests. Most noticeable are the frequent distribution of beebread throughout the brood chambers and the layout of the brood.

Since the queens are not restrained in their egg-laying task by bars or other obstacles, they often fill contiguous areas of a comb sequentially. And yet, in the end the brood nests become nearly circular. This might indicate that the half-moon shape that is considered normal

by beekeepers is actually the result of the comb-limiting effect of shallower beekeeping equipment.

During colony build-up in the spring, the brood chambers may grow to the point of holding eight DD frames. At two square feet of comb surface area per frame, this corresponds to 16 square feet (1.5 m²) of comb, which is adequate for a brood chamber, the honey supers providing additional nectar-storage capacity when necessary. After the divisions of the hives and as summer dearth approaches, the bees may really need only five or six DD frames in the brood chambers. This amount of comb space seems ideal for most colonies overwintering in my apiaries.

DD colonies that prepare to swarm build their queen cells most often along the nearly vertical edges of the combs, or, occasionally, in the rare openings the bees may have created in their interior. Interestingly, they produce far fewer swarm cells than the colonies that live on standard frames. I suspect that this is because the DD brood nests are not interrupted by horizontal gaps, which is where swarm cells are found in our more typical hives. This is yet another striking similarity between the Double-Deep Brood Chambers and wild bee nests.

As I still maintain one apiary where the colonies are on medium Langstroth frames, I can compare these more common hives and the DD hives. Considerably less beekeeper involvement is necessary in the management of the Double-Deep Brood Chamber hives, if only because the large frames are not shuffled between supers. At this point in the trial, I unequivocally prefer the DD hives for the benefits they bring to the bees. However, they require a somewhat different year-round strategy, and I find myself learning how to keep bees in a new way. Exciting!

April in the apiaries

Spring is a time of intense and rapid changes, not the least visible of which are an eruption of bright colors, increasing day length and an explosion of life. This revitalization has been brewing for a while. In the apiaries, the colonies had been growing discreetly inside their brood chambers. The tiny eggs that were laid in late February have become the busy foragers that fill the early April flight paths.

Although colony life may be modulated to some extent by many factors such as the weather, nectar and pollen availability, colony health issues, or by a beekeeper's practices, overall it follows a rather predictable pattern. In the spring, however, there is an important fork in the normal course of events: Some colonies attempt to reproduce; others may not.

Not surprisingly, many beekeepers organize much of their spring apiary work around swarming, which is how colonies multiply. They place swarm traps, race around town and country to chase swarms, and, weather

permitting, they inspect their hives for signs of preparation for swarming, mainly the sudden scarcity of open brood or the presence of queen cells. The colonies are divided when any of these conditions are encountered.

Still, much more has to be done: keeping the yards uncluttered, placing honey supers, possibly harvesting some honey and producing a few queens. For sure, it does not take having a large number of hives to feel overwhelmed by the mass of work that needs to be done in the spring, but let's not forget to enjoy the whitening of the combs, the colorful pollen and the sweet fragrance of the hives. In a few weeks, this hustle will be over.

Until then, the multiplication of our colonies remains our main goal. To obtain quality queens, the best timetable is one decided by the bees. However, the division of the hives is just the start of a process where follow-up is important. Yet, once the beginning of the queen-rearing process has been assured, the colonies should not be disturbed before we expect it to be completed. For this reason, keeping good notes of the timing of the manipulations is particularly helpful, or else we risk endangering the young queens or not addressing queen failures in a timely manner. Let's not forget that these young colonies and queens are the future of our apiaries.

During the inspections of the brood nests, we watch for potential colony health problems, mainly chalkbrood, European foulbrood, or queen-related issues, and we deal with them without delay. After the removal of contaminated brood frames, the bees can rapidly recover from most spring diseases, thanks to good bee nutrition provided by the spring honey flow. The period of broodlessness that is created by the production of young queens during the division of the colonies is also greatly beneficial to the bees in their fight against varroa mites.

The spring honey flow is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to have the bees build new combs. These will replace the old or misshapen ones we routinely discard. As the frames of the honey supers begin to be filled with the light nectar and honey of the season, I frequently place open frames between the combs of still-uncapped honey. The bees extend the uncapped cells into the space that this creates, and the honeycombs become very thick. When these combs are capped, they may hold twice the normal amount of honey and they can be crushed easily to draw the honey. Of course, they also need to be separated by empty frames during transportation to avoid damaging them.

Harvesting spring honey can be a challenge. Some of it has to be collected as soon as possible, as it may crystalize in the combs. However, there are times when spring honey still contains an excessively large proportion of water, especially if the combs are not completely capped. When this is the case, the honeycombs should be left in the hives for further dehydrating and ripening. The frequently mentioned rule of thumb of "harvesting honey when the combs are 75% capped" is not a reliable guide during the spring. Also, when honey can be shaken out of the combs, it is better not to harvest it yet. Time and warm dry weather will help the enzymes the bees added to the nectar do their work. Although a refractometer can be used to test the

water content of the honey, when in doubt it's preferable to just wait a little longer.

As honey starts to accumulate in the supers, more nectar-storage space needs to be provided. This may be done by replacing the frames we harvest with empty ones, or by adding more supers. When adding new supers, I prefer bottom supering, meaning placing the new supers directly above the brood chambers and under any honey supers that were already in place. I invite the bees to work in the new supers by moving follower boards and a few frames from the previous supers into the new ones. Doing this transfers the odor of the colony and some of their work-in-progress into the new supers, and the bees immediately accept these additions.

Some space in the hives needs to be available to the returning foragers for clustering at night or during periods of inclement weather. The correct location of this space is between the brood nests and the entrances of the hives. When this space is not present, the foragers are forced to stay outside and the colony may be driven to swarm prematurely. Adding a super with frames between the hive bottom and the brood chamber is an effective way of creating this clustering space. However, when the hives have been properly managed in early spring, without reversing of the brood chambers, the bees make this happen spontaneously.

Yes, there is a lot to do at this time of year. But it's a lot of fun and we can hope that it will be very productive in the end.

Continued on the Next Page

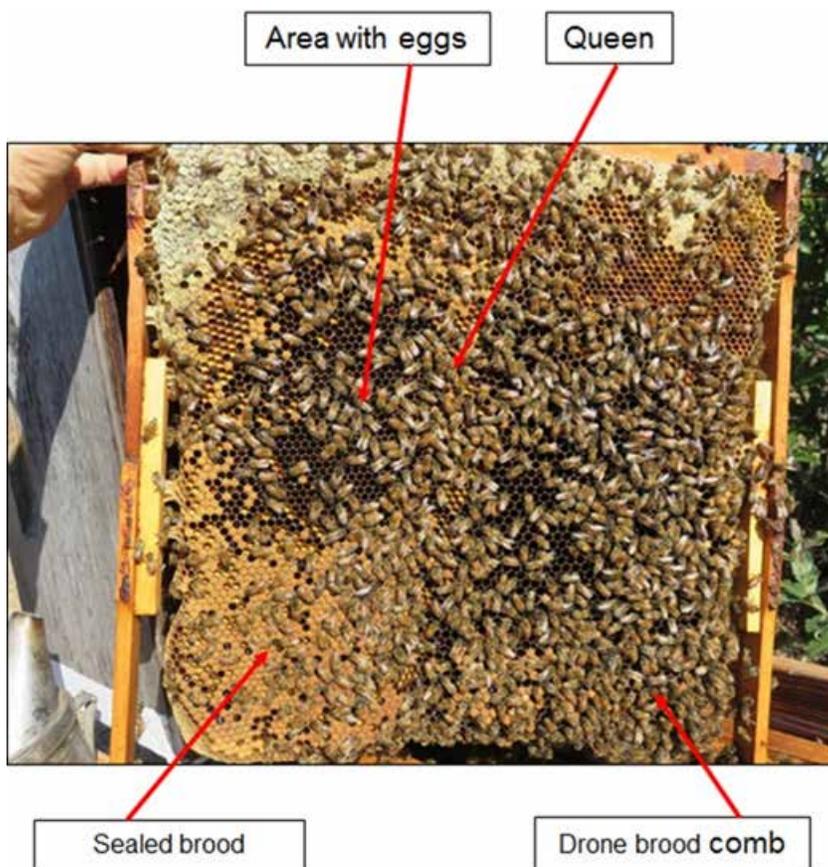
Let's Learn Each Other's Names!

Due to a number of asks for SCBA member name badges one of our Central Cluster members, Paul Quistgard, graciously took on the task of finding a way to make this possible. At the next general meeting Paul will have order forms located at the lobby table for members to fill out. The badges will be handed out at the general meeting(s) and will be the responsibility of the member. Please contact Paul with any questions or concerns. Paul Quistgard, paulquistgard@aol.com cell: 425-877-5123

In summary, this month:

- I highly encourage all beekeepers NOT to order, buy or bring in package bees, nucs and queens from outside our immediate area! Instead, arrange to obtain bees from neighbor beekeepers.
- Inspect the hives regularly. Focus your attention on the open brood (eggs and young larvae) for signs of health issues and colony preparation for swarming.
- Ensure unimpeded development of the brood nests. Add frames to provide egg-laying space and comb-building opportunities.
- Add frames and supers to provide nectar storage space.
- Ensure the presence of clustering space between the brood nests and the hive entrances.
- Perform hive divisions when the colonies are initiating their preparations for swarming.
- Rear a few queens from your best stock.
- Observe the monitoring trays, particularly for signs of brood diseases, chalkbrood mummies, EFB-affected larvae or other health-related problems.
- Gradually open the entrances of the hives to match the increasing forager activity.
- Harvest only surplus early spring honey.
- Make sure you leave enough honey in the hives, 20 lb. being adequate for a mature colony at this time of year.
- Monitor the swarm traps that were set out.
- Requeen or combine overwintered hives that are not performing satisfactorily, and those that have failing queens.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
- Maintain sources of water for the bees.
- Pull weeds from in front of the hives.
- Discard old and misshapen combs.
- Render wax from discarded frames.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

Serge Labesque
© 2018



This is a DD frame from an average-strength colony, in early summer and in a drought year. The comb was built during the spring. The queen, which is visible near the center of the comb, just started laying eggs in the area of open cells (at left and above an area of sealed brood). During its construction, the comb was visibly skewed toward the entrance, which is at lower left in this picture. The comb builders filled the lower right quadrant of the comb with drone-size cells. Note the crown of honey and the placement of stores throughout the brood nest, which ensures good nutrition of the brood.

Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

Family: boraginaceae

This ancient medicinal herb has been used in traditional western and Chinese medicine for centuries. Its botanical name is derived from the Greek warrior Achilles who was dipped in yarrow by his mother to protect him in battle, but as we all know, held him by his heels, where an arrow pierced him and led to his death.

Mythology aside, yarrow does have many beneficial uses in the garden and medicinally. Honeybees, native bees, beneficial wasps and hoverflies, ladybird beetles, butterflies and moths feed on the abundant nectar that is found in the flower heads, umbels of numerous daisy-shaped blossoms in white, yellow, bright to deep pink or salmon colored hues. The white flowered varieties are said to be the most medicinal. Local natives include *A. millefolium* 'Calistoga', 'Sonoma Coast', and 'Tomales Point Form'.

Yarrow can be very successfully used in companion planting, as it is said to benefit plants that it grows with, even possibly increasing the oil content of other herbs. It improves soil tilth and is widely used to boost compost quality.

Did I mention that yarrow is a beautiful plant? In Mexican tradition, it is called "plumajillo" (little feather) due to the delicate ferny leaves. The aromatic green or gray leaves are attractive year around. Eventually yarrow will form a mat, making it a great groundcover, even a lawn substitute.

The leaves and flowers can be dried for decorative uses, or used medicinally. It is easy to grow, accepting a variety of soils, from clay to sandy loam. It tolerates regular to infrequent water and is generally known as being drought tolerant. Easy to grow from seed, or by root cutting, yarrow will re-seed throughout the garden. You can pull it and add to compost if it appears where you don't want it. Deer generally avoid it.

Native to North America and Eurasia, yarrow has a long history of medicinal uses. Often mentioned in literature is its use as an anti-inflammatory, both internally and applied as a poultice to bruises and wounds and sprains. Some people make tinctures for stomach cramps and indigestion; yarrow also is used in teas with other herbs for reducing fever. Salves are often mentioned to treat varicose veins.

The medicinal uses are mentioned here for interest only and are not recommendations.

Alice Ford-Sala



Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

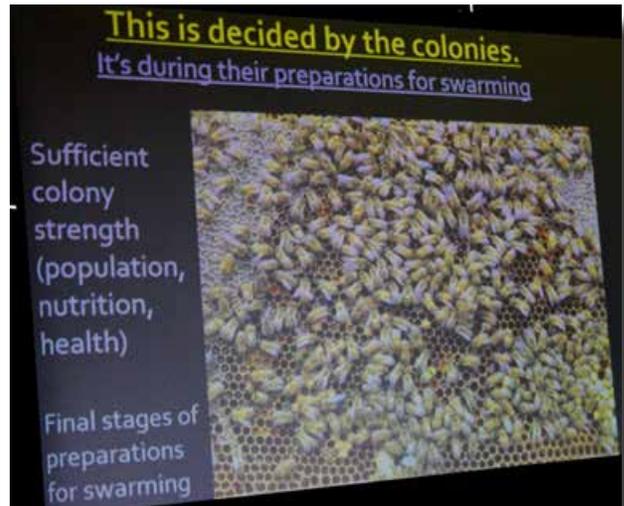
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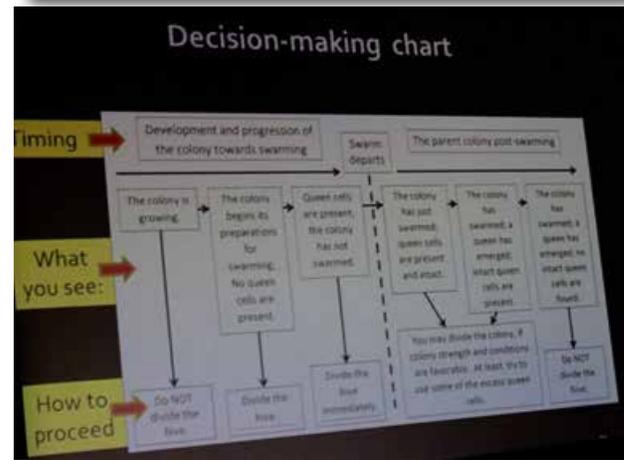
Order Bees Now!

South Cluster Has Workshop on Hive Division

In March Nicolina Hull-Campbell led the workshop on Hive Division using the wonderful power point presentation that Serge Labesque put together for all the clusters to use. There were lots of members of the south cluster there. A good discussion was held. Afterward the members were sent a copy of Serge's directions to help them remember all they learned. These directions are for the members' use and will not be shared, as they are the intellectual property of Serge Labesque.



These are two of Serge's proprietary slides in the power point presentation on hive splitting



North Cluster Makes Ready for Swarm Season

By Candice Koseba

The north cluster had a gathering in March to build swarm traps. They were baited with bits of old comb and lemon grass oil. There were few newbees and a few veterans! There was lots of idea sharing about the best way to use these traps and storytelling. Tea and homemade cheesy butter delicious crackers made by the host Carrie. Gorgeous views as well.



Oliver's Markets and SCBA A Success Story!

By Carol Ellis

It all started last August when SCBA member George Herrmann approached Oliver's, hoping they could make a donation to our Annual Holiday Auction

"I sent a letter rather than an email to highlight the fact that bees and Oliver's date back before all the social networking that seems to rule our lives today. I picked Oliver's because they are only in Sonoma and had just run an ad stressing that fact," George says.

In February, he got an email from Sara Cummings, the communications director from Oliver's, hoping to discuss their upcoming, weekly store ad highlighting honey products.

So, he set up a meeting.

"It was during this meeting that I pushed to turn the ad more about bees and less about honey. I talked about the plight of the bees and how the SCBA was active in saving the bees."

Gleaning from the SCBA brochure, the Garden Group brochure, and the materials from the Education Committee, George provided Oliver's multiple facts about honeybees and the recipe for The Roundup spray substitute that they ultimately used in their weekly ad and in-store flyers.

They also talked about the Oliver's Community Card. With this card, every time the card holder checks out their groceries, 3% of their total could go to SCBA, if that is their designated nonprofit. (Look for a sign-up sheet at the general meetings)

On Saturday, March 10, SCBA member volunteers went to each of the Oliver's locations, simultaneously, for 3 hours, to talk about bees and ask people to donate to our organization.

A week later, we received this letter from Sara, at Oliver's.

"...Thanks to you and your fellow SCBA members for supporting our "Bees and Honey" ad last week with promotion and store appearances.

Our customers seem to see the value of what you do, because across our four stores, we had donations to

SCBA totaling \$1,465.25, which we are matching for a total donation to SCBA in the amount of \$2,930.50!...."

Hopefully, Oliver's will become a long-term partner with SCBA and we will be part of their weekly fundraising promotion every year!

Thank you George Herrmann for making this amazing connection and for providing so much information about honeybees! The fliers reached thousands of people all over Sonoma County!

Thank you, also, to the volunteers, (Sonja Moug, Emily Gaines, Carol Ellis, Paul Quisgard, Sandy Sandine, and Rorie Sweeney,) who went out to the Oliver's that Saturday and did an awesome job representing SCBA and educating the public about honeybees!

What a great success story!



SCBA table in Windsor



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*Designed and endorsed by Serge Labesque
Recommended by Christine Kurtz*

John McGinnis

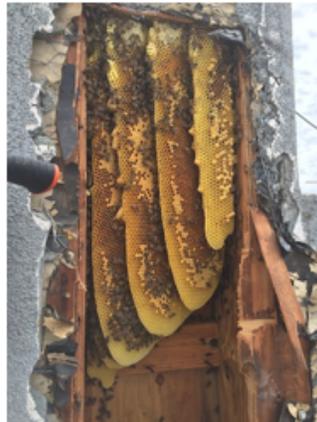
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Santa Rosa

Free Bee Colony for successful referral.

Honey Extractor Rental

Members have use of the association's honey extracting equipment, as available. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Extractors must be returned clean.

Email or call to reserve:

South

Ettamarie Peterson
707-479-1613

editor@petersonsfarm.com

Central

Paul Quistgard

PaulQuistgard@aol.com

West

Cheryl Veretto

707-827-3774 (preferred)

cheryl@cbfreelance.com

East

Susan Simmons

925-408-4529

Susanjsimmons@gmail.com

The Top Bar Hive group has a fruit press available for use in honeycomb crushing. Contact Jim Spencer at topbargroup@sonomabees.org



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2018 Board Members

and Other Helpful People

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Roster of SCBA Resources

Sonoma County Beekeepers Association

Monthly Meeting

February 12, 2018

Location - 4H Building , Rohnert Park

Start approximately 7:00

In Attendance approximately 109

Items covered

- Ann Jereb congratulated for Beek of the Month for February!
- SCBA Info Night
 1. Bee-ing in Total Community
 2. Started in 1977 as Sebastopol Bee Club
 3. In the last 5+ years membership has more than doubled to 400+ members
 4. Board of Directors and appointed Board Members introduced
 5. SCBA committees and services covered
 6. Volunteer Committee presented
 7. Education Committee presented an overview of their programs and the intricacies of queen mating
 8. Regional Cluster program presented

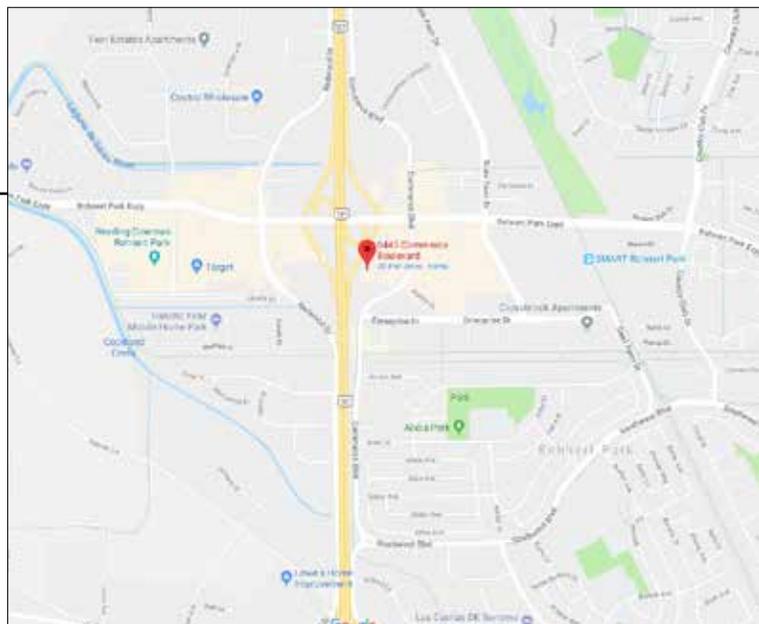
Adjourn 8:57pm

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Jones
Secretary

Contact Information

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building. The meetings cover a wide range of topics of interest to beekeepers. Everyone wanting to learn about honeybees is cordially invited to attend. You do not need to be a member nor a beekeeper to attend these meetings. Dues can be paid online at our website sonomabees.org, at our monthly meetings or by mail. Please see our Website for the application and various kinds of memberships available.



Our mailing address is:
Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
P.O. Box 98
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

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